



## Senate Approves McConnell-Feinstein Bill Renewing Trade Sanctions on Burma

July 26, 2006

*Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate today approved legislation by Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) extending trade sanctions on Burma because of the country's deplorable human rights situation and the ruling military junta's complete rejection of democracy.*

*Since the House has already passed a similar bill sponsored by Representatives Tom Lantos, D-Calif. and Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), the legislation will now go to the President for signature.*

*In a floor statement urging passage of the bill, Senator Feinstein also called on the United Nations Security Council to debate and pass a resolution on Burma that recognizes the threat the current regime poses to the region and calls for the release of all prisoners of conscience, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's National League for Democracy. The following is Senator Feinstein's statement entered into the Congressional Record:*

**“Mr. President, I rise today in support of legislation to renew the ban on all imports from Burma for another year.**

**The House unanimously passed this bill earlier this month and I urge the Senate to follow suit today.**

**This bill amends the original Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 to allow the sanctions to be renewed, one year at a time, for up to six years.**

**Simply put, the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council has done nothing over the past three years to warrant a lifting of the sanctions.**

**It has failed miserably to make “substantial and measurable progress” towards recognition of the 1990 elections – decisively won by Aung San Suu Ky's National League for Democracy – and a full restoration of representative government.**

**If we vote to lift the sanctions pre-maturely, we will only reward Rangoon for its rejection of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.**

**Let us review the facts.**

**Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and leader of the National League for Democracy, is confined to her home by orders of the military junta. She recently celebrated her 61<sup>st</sup> birthday under house arrest and on June 9, 2006 her detention was renewed for another year.**

**She has spent the better part of the past 16 years imprisoned or under house arrest.**

**The human rights situation in Burma is deplorable and demands a clear, unified response from the international community:**

- **1,300 political prisoners are still in jail;**
- **according to a report by the Asian human rights group, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, 127 democracy activists have been tortured to death since 1988;**
- **70,000 child soldiers have been forcibly recruited;**
- **the practice of rape as a form of repression has been sanctioned by the Burmese military;**
- **use of forced labor is widespread;**
- **human trafficking is rampant; and**
- **the government engages in the production and distribution of opium and methamphetamine.**

**Given this substantial list of abuses, it is no surprise that a recent report by former Czech president Vaclav Havel and retired archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa – “Threat to Peace: A Call for the UN Security Council to Act on Burma” – confirms the need for United Nations intervention.**

**It details how the situation in Burma fulfills each of the criteria used for past intervention by the Security Council:**

- **overthrow of an elected government;**
- **armed conflicts with ethnic minorities;**
- **widespread human right violations;**
- **outflow of refugees (over 700,000); and**
- **drug production and trafficking and the spread of HIV/AIDS.**

**The report should be required reading for all members of the United Nations who doubt whether or not the Security Council should take up Burma immediately.**

**Some may argue that because the sanctions have not achieved their desired goals – the release of Suu Kyi, the restoration of a free and democratic Burma – they should be terminated.**

**I could not disagree more.**

**First, Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic opposition continue to support a ban on all imports from Burma.**

**Second, the international community is coming together to put pressure on Burma:**

- **In July 2005, ASEAN forced Burma to forgo its scheduled rotation as chairman of the organization;**
- **On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the UN Security Council debated the situation in Burma for the first time.**
- **Last month, the United Nations Undersecretary for Political Affairs briefed members of the Security Council on his meeting with Suu Kyi, her first meeting with a foreigner since 2004.**
- **A group of legislators from member countries strongly urged ASEAN last week to take concrete measures to resolve the political situation in Burma.**
- **Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar, whose country currently chairs ASEAN, blasted Burma in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* this week for undermining the credibility of ASEAN by not moving closer to democracy.**

**And, finally, I believe we are making progress on having a majority of the United Nations Security Council support adding Burma to the agenda of the Security Council for debate and possible passage of a binding, non-punitive resolution on Burma.**

**By taking a leadership role on this issue, the United States has inspired other countries in the United Nations to put pressure on Burma to respect the wishes of its people and the international community to release Suu Kyi and restore a democratic, representative government.**

**They have begun to recognize that – as the Havel-Tutu report documents – Burma’s actions not only represent a threat to the rights and freedoms of the Burmese people, but to the region and international community as a whole.**

**I strongly urge those members of the Security Council who have not done so to add their names to the growing list of countries who support adding Burma to the Council’s agenda. Passage of this legislation today will serve as another beacon of hope for the Burmese people and another example of leadership that will bring other countries to their side.**

**I remind my colleagues that under the provisions of this legislation, we will have the opportunity to debate sanctions on Burma every year. That is how it should be.**

**Sanctions are not a panacea for every foreign policy dispute. But, when they are backed by a robust international response, they can be effective and they can compel change.**

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu has rightly said, “As long as [Suu Kyi] remains under house arrest, not one of us is truly free”.**

**Today, I urge the SPDC to release Aung San Suu Kyi, recognize the 1990 elections, and engage in a true dialogue with the National League for Democracy.**

**I urge the United Nations Security Council to debate and pass a binding, non-punitive resolution on Burma that recognizes the threat the regime poses to the region and calls for Suu Kyi and all prisoners of conscience to be released.**

**And, finally, I urge United States Senate to renew the sanctions on Burma for another year.”**

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